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ABSTRACT

To develop a comprehensive teacher observation instrument, 56 school practitioners submitted 200 critical incidents--descriptions and judgments of their observations of teacher-pupil interactions in the classroom. Five teacher roles emerged: instructional facilitator; instructional manager; instructional evaluator; instructional designer; and diagnostician. Because the instrument was designed to observe student-teacher interaction, it focused on the first two roles. The instrument recorded five context variables: time of day or week; subject matter; lesson type--introduction, review, or conclusion; size of instructional group; and teaching style--open plan vs. traditional classroom. A pilot study showed a distinct difference in teaching behavior patterns between open and traditional classrooms. (A sample data sheet for recording teacher behavior is appended.) (CP)

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A Process for Identifying, Observing and Describing Classroom Teacher Behavior

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A Process for Identifying Observing and Describing
Classroom Teacher Behavior

This research was started 2 years ago during the 1975-76 school year. It was initiated as an effort to gain information about the schooling process, teacher and student behavior in schools and the impact of teaching strategies on learner outcomes.

Berliner (1976) characterizes the problems of research on teacher behavior in classrooms as problems of instrumentation, methodology and statistics. And Heath and Nielson (1974) suggest that the flaws in research of this type are due, in part, to sterile operational definitions of both teacher behavior and learner outcomes.

Lee Cronbach (1975) has admonished educational researchers to augment our previous traditional quantitative data with qualitative data as well if we are to advance our understanding of human behavior in the schooling process.

This research addressed the problems of research on teaching in terms of the definitions of teacher behavior, instrumentation for collecting in-class data and the research methodology. It focused on the comprehensive nature of the multiple functions of the teacher within the classroom, and within the organizational framework of the school, rather than focusing on the outcomes of individual teacher acts within the classroom. My work moved toward identifying effective combinations of teacher behavior in relation to the context in which they occur. The context includes such factors as subject matter, size of instructional group, grade level, student type, etc. Methodologies outside those of traditional educational psychology were used to explore this complex social enterprise. The methodology used was the ethnographic technique developed by anthropologists and community-study sociologists (Wilson, 1977). The importance of this technique for this research was that unlike prestructured research designs, the information that is gathered and the theories that emerge are used to direct subsequent data collection. Consequently, using an adapted ethnographic procedure an explicit, comprehensive classroom teacher observation instrument resulted.

Purpose

The purpose of the study was to: 1) collect descriptive data about classroom teacher behavior; 2) analyze the descriptive data to identify teaching behavior patterns as well as specific teaching acts; 3) design instruments to use in classroom observations; 4) identify teacher behavior patterns, the context and frequency with which they occur in natural settings; and 5) analyze the resulting observation data to describe teacher behavior patterns which appear crucial to successful learner achievement for a particular instructional setting under certain conditions.

Procedures

Rather than collecting in-class, descriptive observation data in the typical ethnographic manner, we asked 56 school practitioners to submit critical incidents (Ryans, 1960) of teaching. The practitioners included teachers, principals, supervisors, counselors, school psychologists, and graduate education students who submitted some 200 critical incidents. The incidents described an actual observed teaching act and identified the context of the teaching-learning situation, described what happened, and concluded whether the teacher was effective or ineffective. Consequently, the practitioners acted as participant-observers to provide ethnographic descriptions of teacher behavior in naturalistic settings.

Two graduate education students and I analyzed the incidents with the following outcomes:

1. Behavior pattern categories emerged from the critical incident reports in that each report seemed to match others in some generic sense. Five of these behavior pattern categories were distinguished and called roles: (a) Diagnostician; (b) Instructional Designer; (c) Instructional Facilitator; (d) Instructional Manager; and (e) Instructional Evaluator.
2. Specific teaching acts within each role category were discerned from the critical incidents. Review of these teaching acts across the role categories revealed that Instructional Facilitator and Instructional Manager behaviors were most likely manifest during lesson interaction with students. The other three role categories were more likely to occur before and after school or during 'prep' periods.

3. Since teacher-pupil interaction was a major concern of this study, we decided to focus on the two roles (i.e., Instructional Facilitator and Manager) when that interaction was most likely to occur. Consequently, an observation instrument was designed to observe teacher frequency of behavior within these two roles.

A pilot study using a first draft of this instrument was conducted during May, 1977 and yielded several important revisions. A comprehensive final draft is in use now in a field-study which simultaneously observes teacher and student behaviors.

The instrument has the capability of recording 5 classroom context variables which emerged from the pilot study as having some importance for teaching behavior patterns: a) Time; b) Subject Matter; c) Lesson Type; d) Size of Instructional Group; and e) Teaching Style.

a) Time refers to the time of day or week when the lesson occurs. For example Monday a.m. observations of teachers differed from Wednesday and Friday, p.m.

b) Subject Matter identifies teacher behaviors within the areas of Math, Reading, Science and Social Studies; and pilot study data suggests that Facilitator and Manager behaviors differ from one subject to another.

c) Lesson Type describes whether a lesson is 1) introduction of a new topic or concept, 2) review of previous material or 3) concluding work conducted of several days duration.

d) Size of Instructional Group refers to the difference in teacher behaviors whether they are working with the whole group, small group or independently. And lastly,

e) Teacher Style identifies whether the teacher is working in an open classroom, traditional or modern conventional style classroom. (Modern conventional, in this school district, is a mixture of open and traditional)

Conclusions/Implications

Such a research procedure as described here can be initiated at the local school level without outside funding and will contribute to the organization of staff development efforts. Of priority importance is that effective teacher behavior is locally defined by participants in the school enterprise, and teachers are an integral part of educational planning. Teacher competencies become locally relevant for the pupil population that is to be serviced, and

therefore, more meaningful staff development occurs.

One of the best examples of how this research methodology may apply in local policy matters was an outcome of the pilot study, conducted during the 1976-77 school year.

In this school district they had 3 types of classrooms to accommodate learning and teaching styles: 1) open; 2) modern conventional; and 3) traditional. District administrators felt that little difference existed between "open" and "modern conventional." However, the teacher behavior patterns showed a distinctive difference between the 2 types of classrooms. Although learner materials and activities appeared very similar, the two teachers at the same grade level teaching the same subject had different teaching style profiles. One (the open classroom) apparently had a high tolerance for noise and physical movement during lessons, as well as encouraged pupil independence to inquire about and solve an instructional problem. Whereas, the other teacher (modern conventional) encouraged pupil independence for very brief (maximum of 10 minutes) time periods, and she continuously cautioned learners to remain in their work areas and to keep talk to a minimum noise level.

Such data as described about the open classroom teacher, when compared with a more traditional teaching style of a colleague was very important to school district policy-makers, as well as those who were involved with teacher-effectiveness research. To identify teacher competencies at the local school level appears the more immediate task, and possibly major researchers will later synthesize longitudinal, local data to contribute to a theory of teaching. Effective teaching definitions depend upon the context of the instructional setting: effective for whom, what subject, what classroom, how many learners, etc?

TFI-MB

TEACHER FREQUENCY OF INSTRUCTIONAL/MANAGERIAL BEHAVIOR

School:_____
Grade:_____
Date:_____
Time:_____
_____
_____

Type of Lesson: I_____
C_____
R-S_____
No. of Students_____

	Independent			Small Group			Whole Group			Total
INSTRUCTIONAL BEHAVIOR	T^1	T^2	T^3	T^1	T^2	T^3	T^1	T^2	T^3	
INSTRUCTIONAL FACILITOR										
1. Giving instructional directions.										
2. Discussing instructional plans.										
3. Discussing instructional progress.										
4. Discussing topical content.										
5. Assisting to complete instructional task(s).										
6. Praising/reinforcing.										
7. Initiating student-peer interactions.										
INSTRUCTIONAL MANAGER										
1. Defining classroom/ instructional rules.										
2. Granting permission or directing students to act.										
3. Monitoring seatwork.										
4. Organizing/distributing materials.										
5. Taking attendance.										
Other Specify:										
Total										

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